

PEDRO RODRIGUEZ

January 21, 2009

NJ State Board of Education

Dear Commissioners:

My name is Pedro Rodriguez resident of Paterson New Jersey. I come before you as a parent of three boys whom are public school students in the Paterson's District. I also come before you as resident of the State of New Jersey who is concerned with the turn that our education system could take with the High School Redesign.

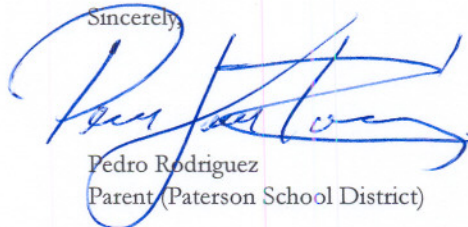
I want start by saying that I don't oppose raising the bar or having our children better prepared for the future. I'm not opposed to higher standards in our education system at all levels. What I'm opposing is the method that we are trying to use to acquire those higher standards and the consequences that we might be facing if those methods are implemented.

I hope you can understand that in our educational system one size doesn't fit all. That we have a tremendous achievement gap between districts. That if we look at the Science standard test given to our students in 2007, only 31% of Paterson's students were at a proficient level compared to 73% average in the entire New Jersey. That's a 42% Achievement gap. If we look at the Limited English Proficient students just 8% were at proficient levels for a 65% achievement gap. Commissioners' one size doesn't fit all.

The method of testing more without providing adequate tools and resources for our children to succeed is going to increase the achievement gap between districts. It has the potential to deteriorate even more the school drop out rate, which in Paterson is over 50% and the main reason why we have juvenile crime ranked as number one in our city.

I hope you can put into a balance the benefits of more testing versus the negative impact that this could have in our children. I am confident that you will use good judgment and will think on all our children before making your decision. I'm also confident that we have enough talent in our Department of Education to come up with alternative solutions to better prepare our children without the negative effects that this current proposal has.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Pedro Rodriguez', is written over a horizontal line.

Pedro Rodriguez
Parent (Paterson School District)